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Algorithms, Activism, and Agility: How Networked Youth Movements Reframe Corporate Risk in Emerging Markets

Raymond Nwinkom Dumeh, Lucy Agyepong

Department of Mechanical Engineering, Academic City University, Accra, Ghana
Email: raymond.dumeh@acity.edu.gh

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Abstract

The rapid rise of networked, algorithm-driven youth movements across Africa is fundamentally disrupting established corporate risk management paradigms. Focusing on Nigeria (#EndSARS) and Kenya (#RejectFinanceBill), this study investigates how decentralized digital activism reframes board-level risk perception and executive decision-making in emerging markets. Drawing on Stakeholder Salience, Executive Sensemaking, and Political Corporate Social Responsibility (PCSR) theories, we deploy a comparative qualitative multi-case design analyzing banking, fintech, telecommunications, and FMCG firms heavily exposed during these socio-political flashpoints ($N = 28$ informants: 24 corporate executive interviews and 4 movement strategist interviews, triangulated with 142 corporate/regulatory records and historical trend data). We reveal a paradigm shift: corporate boards face a Dual-Coercion Squeeze, forced to balance autocratic state mandates against coercive, algorithmic consumer boycotts. We show that digital platform mechanics generate Algorithmic Salience: allowing leaderless youth networks to rapidly gain high Power and Urgency without formal institutional Legitimacy. We articulate key theoretical boundary conditions (such as B2C vs. B2B operational exposure and hybrid political regime intensity) and demonstrate that under extreme temporal compression, traditional quarterly risk registries fail, driving leadership toward Agile Risk Governance characterized by real-time social listening, cross-functional crisis war rooms, and strategic operational neutrality. Ultimately, this study provides an integrative framework for navigating the intersection of state authority and digital youth power in developing economies.

Keywords

Algorithmic Salience, Dual-Coercion, Agile Risk Governance, Youth Activism,

Corporate Crisis Management, Emerging Markets, PCSR, Boundary Conditions

1. Introduction

In October 2020, Nigerian financial institutions and telecommunications providers were caught in a complex operational crossfire: state regulators issued directives to restrict financial assets linked to #EndSARS protesters, while hyper-networked youth coalitions launched targeted, algorithmic boycotts against brands perceived as state accomplices (Oloruntoba, 2021). Four years later, Kenyan corporate boards faced a similar operational challenge during the #RejectFinanceBill movement, as digital-native Gen Z networks bypassed traditional civil society organizations to disrupt major corporate operations, target corporate tax strategies, and execute real-time brand boycotts (Cheeseman et al., 2025).

These flashpoints highlight a fundamental gap in contemporary management theory: traditional Corporate Risk Management (CRM) models remain anchored in linear, predictable framework expectations (Bromiley et al., 2015). Classic non-market risk literature assumes that societal threats manifest through structured, institutionalized actors, such as trade unions, registered non-governmental organizations, or formal political parties, with identifiable leadership and negotiable demands (Baron, 1995, 2001). However, algorithmically amplified youth movements in emerging markets operate under an entirely different logic. Decoupled from formal hierarchies, these leaderless networks utilize platform architectures (e.g., X, TikTok, Telegram) to generate rapid, non-linear operational risks ("black swan" social shocks) that collapse traditional crisis response timelines from weeks into hours (Tufekci, 2017).

This study investigates how corporate boards and executive leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa perceive, make sense of, and adapt to algorithmically driven youth activism. While existing Political Corporate Social Responsibility (PCSR) literature offers deep insights into corporate-state relations in Western contexts (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011), it largely neglects the structural pressures faced by executives in emerging markets (Frynas & Stephens, 2015). Here, corporate leadership operates within a Dual-Coercion State: squeezed simultaneously by coercive state demands (regulatory retaliation, license revocations, state-directed network throttling) and coercive consumer backlash (viral app-store downvoting, physical asset destruction, and brand equity deficits).

By deploying a comparative qualitative multi-case design across heavily exposed sectors (banking/fintech, telecommunications, and FMCG) in Nigeria and Kenya, this paper addresses three primary research questions:

1) Algorithmic Salience: How do virality and digital platform dynamics rapidly assign high Power and Urgency to non-institutionalized actors without formal legitimacy under classic stakeholder models (Mitchell et al., 1997)?

2) Temporal Sensemaking & Boundary Conditions: How do executive lead-

ership teams process collapsed sensemaking timelines during real-time social media surges (Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005), and what structural moderators (such as B2C vs. B2B customer exposure and political regime hybridity) delimit these dynamics?

3) Agile Governance Adaptation: How do corporate boards transition from static quarterly risk registries toward dynamic, real-time risk oversight (Scherer et al., 2016)?

Ultimately, this study contributes to management theory by extending Mitchell et al.'s (1997) Stakeholder Salience Theory and Weick's (1995) Sensemaking model to propose an integrative framework of Algorithmic Risk Governance. In doing so, we offer critical insights into how firms in developing economies can navigate the precarious intersection of state power and digital-native citizen expectations.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Pillar 1: Reconceptualizing Stakeholder Salience in the Algorithmic Era

Classical stakeholder theory posits that managerial attention is a scarce cognitive resource allocated based on Stakeholder Salience: the degree to which managers give priority to competing stakeholder claims (Mitchell et al., 1997). Mitchell et al. (1997) conceptualize salience as a cumulative function of three attributes: Power (coercive, utilitarian, or normative means to impose will), Legitimacy (socially accepted structures and normative standing), and Urgency (the degree to which claims call for immediate attention). In traditional Corporate Risk Management (CRM), definitive stakeholders, which possess all three attributes, are almost exclusively formal, institutionalized entities, such as regulatory agencies, institutional investors, and structured labor unions (Freeman, 1984; Laplume et al., 2008).

However, the emergence of decentralized, digital-native youth activism exposes a theoretical limitation in this classic model. Platform architectures (e.g., recommendation algorithms, trending hashtags, real-time virality) act as exogenous attribute amplifiers (Castells, 2012; Tufekci, 2017). When youth movements mobilize around socio-political flashpoints, such as #EndSARS in Nigeria or #RejectFinanceBill in Kenya, they operate without formal organizational structures, designated leadership, or institutional legitimacy (Cheeseman et al., 2025; Oloruntoba, 2021).

Under classic typology (Mitchell et al., 1997), these diffuse networks would be classified as demanding stakeholders (possessing urgency alone) or latent stakeholders, lacking the structural power to alter board-level strategy. Yet, algorithmic mechanics alter this hierarchy:

- **Algorithmic Power:** Virality enables flash-mobilization, triggering immediate economic consequences through crowdsourced app-store downvoting, coordinated boycott campaigns, and physical threats to corporate assets (Shirky, 2008).

- **Algorithmic Urgency:** Real-time trend metrics collapse notice periods, forcing claims to the top of executive agendas within minutes (Tufekci, 2017).

Formal Definition: Algorithmic Salience: *The degree to which non-institutionalized, leaderless stakeholder claims gain immediate managerial priority through the automated, non-linear amplification mechanics of digital platform architectures* (*e.g.*, *recommendation algorithms*, *trending metrics*, *viral network cascades*), *artificially granting high perceived Power and Urgency in the absence of traditional institutional Legitimacy*.

By introducing Algorithmic Salience, we do not merely apply Mitchell et al. (1997); we demonstrate that in digital environments, Legitimacy is no longer an absolute prerequisite for Stakeholder Power. Algorithms temporarily decouple Power from Legitimacy, forcing executive prioritization without formal institutional standing.

2.2. Pillar 2: Executive Sensemaking and Environmental Shock under Temporal Compression

When external shocks disrupt organizational routines, leadership must engage in Sensemaking: the cognitive process through which managers structure unknown contexts, extract cues, and construct meaning to formulate action (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005). Traditional governance structures rely on stable, deliberate sensemaking cycles: risk committees collect quarterly data, evaluate threats against static matrices, and draft multi-phase mitigation playbooks (Bromiley et al., 2015).

Algorithmic youth activism introduces Temporal Compression: an extreme contraction of the window between risk emergence and required organizational response (Boin et al., 2005). When a viral movement targets a firm (for example, accusing a bank of freezing activist accounts or a telecom provider of throttling network access during protests), the speed of public narrative formation outpaces standard governance protocols.

This temporal compression triggers distinct cognitive challenges within executive leadership:

- **Information Overload and Signal Noise:** The sheer volume and velocity of social media sentiment obscure actionable intelligence, making it difficult for boards to distinguish between fleeting internet outrage and material operational risks (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014).
- **Breakdown of Standard Negotiation Playbooks:** Traditional crisis management relies on inter-organizational bargaining with identifiable counter-parties (Baron, 2001). In leaderless, decentralized movements, there are no bargaining tables, representatives, or formal petitions, leading to strategic paralysis (Tufekci, 2017).
- **Hyper-Visibility and Ambiguity:** Executive sensemaking occurs under high public scrutiny where any public communication is immediately dissected, memeified, or weaponized by the online crowd (Castells, 2012).

Thus, algorithmic shocks represent a severe environmental anomaly that challenges legacy sensemaking models, forcing executive teams to make high-stakes operational choices under extreme ambiguity and zero lead time.

2.3. Pillar 3: Political CSR and the Dual-Coercion Squeeze in Emerging Economies

To understand the strategic dilemmas faced by executive leadership during youth-led disruptions, we must examine the nature of non-market strategy in developing markets (Baron, 1995, 2001). Political Corporate Social Responsibility (PCSR) literature (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011; Scherer et al., 2016) explores how business enterprises engage in political activities to fill institutional voids, secure regulatory legitimacy, or provide public goods where state capacity is weak.

In Western contexts, PCSR frameworks predominantly assume a democratic baseline where civil society pressure encourages firms to voluntarily uphold ethical standards (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011). In contrast, emerging markets—particularly those characterized by hybrid political regimes—present a vastly different governance landscape (Frynas & Stephens, 2015). Executives operating in hubs like Lagos or Nairobi face what we conceptualize as the Dual-Coercion Squeeze.

The Dual-Coercion Squeeze manifests as two opposing structural pressures acting simultaneously on the firm:

- **Top-Down State Coercion:** Autocratic or financially strained state authorities leverage regulatory tools to compel corporate compliance (Frynas & Stephens, 2015). This includes mandates directing banks to freeze accounts of movement organizers, forcing telcos to shut down internet access, or pressuring corporations to support unpopular fiscal legislation. Non-compliance risks regulatory retaliation, license revocation, or punitive tax audits.
- **Bottom-Up Networked Consumer Coercion:** Simultaneously, a hyper-connected, youth-dominated customer base demands corporate resistance to state overreach (Oloruntoba, 2021). Algorithmic youth networks utilize real-time digital channels to enforce corporate accountability. Perceived compliance with state directives leads to rapid brand damage, customer churn, viral boycotts, and physical asset risk.

This framework extends PCSR literature by challenging the assumption that political posture in emerging markets is a purely voluntary normative choice. In hybrid regimes, political alignment is an involuntary survival mechanism under dual coercion.

2.4. Theoretical Boundary Conditions & Contextual Moderators

To prevent over-generalization, the applicability of Algorithmic Risk Governance is bounded by two primary theoretical moderators:

- **B2C vs. B2B Market Exposure:** Algorithmic Salience operates with maximum intensity against direct-to-consumer (B2C) firms: retail banks, fintech platforms, mobile networks, and FMCG brands, where digital end-users can im-

mediately weaponize app store downvoting, churn, and brand sabotage. Conversely, business-to-business (B2B) industrial infrastructure and state-owned enterprises (SOEs) are structurally insulated from consumer algorithmic coercion, facing predominantly unilateral state coercion.

- **Regime Hybridity/Authoritarian Intensity:** The Dual-Coercion Squeeze reaches peak friction in hybrid regimes (semi-democracies featuring competitive elections alongside authoritarian state levers, as in Nigeria and Kenya). In consolidated fully autocratic regimes, state repression suppresses bottom-up mobilization, neutralizing Algorithmic Power. In consolidated liberal democracies, state bodies lack the coercive levers (e.g., arbitrary license revocations, account freeze mandates without due process) to enforce Top-Down State Coercion, shifting the dynamics toward conventional PCSR.

3. Methodology

3.1. Unit of Analysis and Selection Logic

The primary unit of analysis is the corporate decision-making unit (specifically executive leadership teams, Chief Risk Officers [CROs], and board-level risk oversight committees) operating within commercial enterprises during socio-political crisis events.

Using a qualitative, comparative multi-case research design (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2018), we examined two primary African economic and digital innovation hubs: Nigeria (#EndSARS, October 2020) and Kenya (#RejectFinanceBill, June-July 2024). Cases were selected using a Theoretical Replication Design (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007) based on shared macro-environmental features: high mobile internet/smartphone penetration, a demographic youth bulge (>60% under 25), hyper-active fintech ecosystems, and vibrant digital public spheres (Bosch, 2019; Mudhai, 2013; Ndlela & Mano, 2020; Nyamnjoh, 2005).

To select specific organizations, entities were classified as "heavily exposed" based on three structural criteria:

1) Direct Consumer Exposure: High B2C operational volume reliant on mass retail consumer transactions (commercial retail banks, consumer fintech platforms, mobile network operators, and FMCG conglomerates).

2) Digital Channel Dependency: Dependence on consumer-facing mobile applications or payment APIs vulnerable to automated app-store rating degradation, social media boycotts, or digital service churn.

3) State Regulatory Mandate Exposure: Exposure to direct state regulatory directives (e.g., Central Bank account-freeze orders or telecommunications authority compliance directives) issued during the focal protest windows.

3.2. Sample Composition & Analytical Roles

We utilized purposive, expert-level sampling to recruit $N = 28$ primary informants across Nigeria ($n = 15$) and Kenya ($n = 13$). To resolve sample classification, participants are divided into two distinct analytical cohorts:

- **Core Corporate Executive Cohort ($n = 24$):** Comprises corporate executive decision-makers including Chief Risk Officers (CROs), Board Chairs/Directors, Heads of Compliance, Chief Regulatory Officers, General Counsels, and Brand/Strategy Directors across Banking & Fintech ($n = 10$), Telecommunications ($n = 9$), and FMCG/Retail Tech ($n = 5$). This cohort provides primary empirical evidence on internal cognitive sensemaking, board-level deliberations, and structural governance adaptations.
- **Digital Movement Strategist Cohort ($n = 4$):** Comprises key digital organizers and campaign strategists from #EndSARS ($n = 2$) and #RejectFinanceBill ($n = 2$). They serve an explicit analytical role as external counter-informants used to triangulate corporate perceptions against ground-level campaign tactics, verify digital campaign chronologies, and confirm mobilization mechanisms.

3.3. Data Triangulation Archive

Granular Corporate Record Corpus ($N = 142$)

To prevent retrospective rationalization, primary interview data were systematically triangulated with a corporate-record corpus of $N = 142$ documents:

Country	Organization Type	Document Type	Access Route	Record Count (N)	Crisis Period Relevance
Nigeria	Banking & Fintech	Quarterly Risk Registries & Internal Crisis Memos	Proprietary Disclosure/Member-Checked	34	Tracks account-freeze compliance & brand impact
Nigeria	Telecommunications	Public Circulars & Regulatory Notices (NCC/CBN)	Public Repository/Regulatory Archive	28	Directives on infrastructure & network compliance
Kenya	Banking & Fintech	Board Audit Committee Minutes & ESG Disclosures	Proprietary Disclosure/Public Filings	31	Real-time tax policy positions & API resilience
Kenya	Telecommunications	Regulatory Notices (CAK) & Corporate Briefs	Public Archives & Investor Briefings	26	Data privacy directives & connectivity management
Both	FMCG & Retail Tech	Investor Relations Briefs & Public Statements	Corporate Disclosures/Press Archives	23	Consumer boycott assessments & supply chain risks

Reproducible Digital Archival Protocol

Digital trend and sentiment data framing board decisions were harvested using a fully reproducible protocol:

1) Data Harvesting Tools: Custom Python scripts utilizing snscrape and the X (Twitter) API v2 endpoints.

2) Target Observation Windows:

- *Nigeria* (*#EndSARS*): October 1, 2020-November 15, 2020.
- *Kenya* (*#RejectFinanceBill*): June 1, 2024-July 31, 2024.

3) Inclusion & Filter Criteria:

- *Movement Hashtags*: #EndSARS, #EndSWAT, #RejectFinanceBill2024, #OccupyParliament.
- *Corporate Target Hashtags*: #Boycott[BankName], #Boycott[TelcoName], #Downvote [AppName].
- *Virality Threshold:* Posts exceeding 500 retweets/shares or top-trending status ($>50,000$ impressions).

4) Sentiment & Trend Derivation: Automated pre-processing via VADER (Valence Aware Dictionary and sEntiment Reasoner), calibrated for regional digital dialects (Naija Pidgin, Sheng). Algorithmic sentiment velocity was derived as the hourly rate of change in negative compound sentiment:

$$\text{Sentiment Velocity} = \frac{\Delta\text{Negative Sentiment}}{\Delta\text{Time (Hours)}}$$

3.4. Methodological Rigor and Trustworthiness

3.4.1. Construct Validity via Data Triangulation

Construct validity was established by utilizing a three-tier data triangulation design (Eisenhardt, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2018). Primary interview transcripts were matched chronologically with corporate disclosures and algorithmic trend spikes to verify the velocity and impact of reported crisis events.

Data Stream	Data Sources Captured	Analytical Purpose in Triangulation
Stream 1: Primary Informants	24 Corporate Executive Interviews (C-Suite, CROs, Board Chairs) + 4 Movement Strategist Interviews ($N=28$).	Captures internal cognitive sensemaking, board conflicts, real-time decision trade-offs, and ground-level mobilization tactics.
Stream 2: Corporate Records	142 Corporate Filings, Annual Risk Registers, Circulars, and Internal Memos.	Validates formal structural adjustments made to organizational risk protocols post-crisis.
Stream 3: Digital Metrics	Archived trend logs, viral sentiment spikes, app-store rating historical dumps.	Establishes objective timeline, algorithmic speed, and external pressure intensity.

3.4.2. Member-Checking Protocols

A two-stage member-checking process was executed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles et al., 2014). First, verbatim transcripts were returned to participants for factual verification and redaction of sensitive proprietary quotes. Second, preliminary second-order themes were presented to a panel of 6 key corporate informants (3 per country) to confirm that derived constructs accurately reflected operational board realities.

3.4.3. Inter-Coder Reliability

Qualitative coding was performed independently in NVivo 14 by two primary researchers following the Gioia methodology (Gioia et al., 2013). An initial calibration sample of 6 rich transcripts (21% of the dataset) yielded an inter-coder agreement index of 89.2% (Cohen's $\kappa = 0.84$; Miles et al., 2014). All coding discrepancies were resolved through iterative renegotiation sessions.

3.4.4. Theoretical Data Saturation

Sampling was guided by theoretical saturation principles (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Guest et al., 2006). Data collection was monitored using a 4-interview rolling block assessment. Informational redundancy: where successive interviews produced zero new 1st-order concepts or 2nd-order themes: was formally achieved across the total $N = 28$ informant sample.

3.5. Ethics, Anonymity, and Sensitivity Protocols

Given the sensitive political nature of the #EndSARS and #RejectFinanceBill movements, which involved state security interventions, asset freezes, and regulatory scrutiny, rigorous ethical protocols were maintained in accordance with institutional review board (IRB) guidelines. To safeguard corporate informants and activist strategists from potential regulatory or political reprisal:

- All participants signed digital informed consent agreements granting permission to record audio while guaranteeing institutional and individual anonymity.
- Identifiers were replaced with alphanumeric codes designating region, sector, and analytical role (e.g., Informant NG-01, Commercial Bank Executive; Informant MO-01, Movement Strategist).
- Primary audio files were transcribed via local air-gapped transcription tools and destroyed post-verification.
- Specific proprietary operational details that could inadvertently identify participating financial institutions or telecom operators were generalized in the final narrative.

4. Empirical Findings

Section 4 Data Structure (Gioia Data Structure Model & Conceptual Framework)

1st-Order Concepts	2nd-Order Themes	Aggregate Theoretical Dimensions
Real-time social metrics surging faster than board briefing cycles	Temporal Compression & Algorithmic Velocity	ALGORITHMIC SALIENCE *Exogenous attribute amplification decoupling Power/ Urgency from traditional institutional Legitimacy*
Leaderless crowds operating without identifiable negotiation heads	Leaderless Legitimacy Vacuum	ALGORITHMIC SALIENCE
Mandates to freeze assets under threat of license revocation	Top-Down State Coercion	DUAL-COERCION SQUEEZE *Existential pincer movement forcing hybrid regime compliance vs. viral consumer churn*
Automated app-store downvoting and consumer boycott campaigns	Bottom-Up Algorithmic Consumer Coercion	DUAL-COERCION SQUEEZE
Shifting from quarterly registries to 24/7 executive war rooms	Real-Time Risk Protocolization	AGILE RISK GOVERNANCE *Dynamic board oversight based on continuous listening, war rooms, and strategic neutrality*
Adopting strict statutory minimums without political endorsements	Tactical Operational Neutrality	AGILE RISK GOVERNANCE

4.1. Algorithmic Stakeholder Salience

Informants consistently highlighted how algorithmic mechanics radically compressed risk perception timelines and invalidated traditional stakeholder classification (Mitchell et al., 1997).

Temporal Compression and Algorithmic Velocity

Corporate crisis playbooks designed around 24-to-48-hour PR review cycles failed under algorithmic velocity. Real-time digital trend surges outpaced formal board notification channels.

Leaderless Stakeholder Legitimacy Vacuum

Executives reported acute paralysis when attempting to initiate standard conflict resolution protocols. Because youth networks operated without formal spokespersons or institutional structures, traditional mediation proved ineffective.

4.2. Dual-Coercion Sensemaking under High Ambiguity

Executives described operating within a high-stakes pincer movement where compliance with state orders directly triggered catastrophic consumer backlash.

State Regulatory Coercion

Informants detailed severe pressure from regulatory bodies demanding compliance with state mandates, including blocking activist transaction channels or restricting digital connectivity under threat of license revocation.

Algorithmic Consumer Backlash

Simultaneously, youth consumers executed swift digital retaliation against firms perceived as complicit with state overreach. This included coordinated campaigns that reduced mobile app ratings from near 5.0 to near 1.0 within hours, causing automated app store delistings and user churn.

Second-Order Theme	1st-Order Concept (Informant Codes)	Selected Data Proofs: Nigeria Context (#EndSARS)	Selected Data Proofs: Kenya Context (#RejectFinanceBill)
Temporal Compression & Velocity	Real-time social metrics surging faster than board briefing cycles.	"Our board meets quarterly. When #EndSARS hit, the trending metrics were changing by the minute. By the time the board held an emergency call, our brand was already being boycotted." *Informant NG*-04 (*Chief Risk Officer*, *Tier*-1 *Bank*)	"The speed was terrifying. Within 4 hours, a hashtag targeting our service infrastructure was at #1 globally. Traditional PR approval chains take 24 hours. We were completely defenseless." *Informant KE*-02 (*Corporate Affairs Director*, *Telco*)
Leaderless Legitimacy Vacuum	Inability to identify or negotiate with designated movement representatives.	"Normally you invite union leaders or NGO directors to a room and negotiate. Who do you call when 500,000 Gen-Z users are running a coordinated action? There was no 'head' to cut a deal with." *Informant NG*-09 (*Founder & CEO*, *Fintech*)	"We asked our political liaisons to set up a meeting with the organizers. They came back and said, 'There is no committee.' It was an algorithmic hive mind. We didn't know who to talk to." *Informant KE*-11 (*Chief Executive*, *Digital Payments*)
Dual-Coercion Squeeze	Caught between state regulatory orders and digital customer revolts.	"The regulatory agency gave us a direct command: freeze these accounts or lose your banking license. But the youth said:	"If we supported the fiscal policy, the youth promised a total digital boycott. If we opposed it publicly, tax authorities

		freeze those accounts, and we burn your branches down. We were trapped." *Informant NG*-01 (*Head of Compliance*, *Commercial Bank*)	threatened punitive audits. It was an existential pincer movement." *Informant KE*-07 (*Chief Strategy Officer*, *FMCG Conglomerate*)
Agile Risk Governance	Replaces static quarterly registries with real-time, cross-functional crisis rooms.	"Static risk heat maps are dead. We created a permanent, real-time social listening node directly feeding into the Board Audit & Risk Committee on a daily basis during flashpoints." *Informant NG*-12 (*Board Member*, *Financial Services*)	"Agility meant empowering middle management to make rapid narrative adjustments without waiting for full board assembly. Governance had to match the speed of the algorithm." *Informant KE*-05 (*Group Chief Risk Officer*)

4.3. Transitioning to Agile Risk Governance

In response to these shocks, boards institutionalized structural adaptations to preserve enterprise continuity.

Real-Time Risk Protocolization

Static quarterly risk matrices were replaced with continuous social listening infrastructure feeding directly into executive war rooms operating 24/7 during crisis windows.

Operational Neutrality and Strategic Decoupling

Firms adopted a posture of operational neutrality: strictly adhering to legal statutory minimums while decoupling corporate brand communications from state political rhetoric.

4.4. Operationalization of Core Framework Constructs

To enable future theoretical testing and empirical replication, the table translates our qualitative findings into observable operational indicators.

Theoretical Construct	Operational Indicator	Empirical Manifestation in Case Data
Algorithmic Velocity	Delta time from hashtag spike to C-suite notification.	Reduced from 48 - 72 hours (standard crisis) to <4 hours (#EndSARS & #RejectFinanceBill).
Digital Coercion Intensity	Rate of app-store rating degradation & social churn metrics.	Average reduction of 3.5 stars within 12 hours on Google Play/App Store; viral boycott reach >1M impressions.
State Regulatory Pressure	Severity of compliance directives under threat of penalty.	Explicit directives to freeze accounts or throttle network bandwidth under threat of immediate license revocation.
Governance Response Agility	Decision latency for operational/narrative adjustment.	Compressed from quarterly board cycles to 2-to-4-hour executive war room authorization windows.

4.5. Alternative Explanations & Strategic Differentiation

An important question is whether observed corporate shifts represent routine cri-

sis public relations (PR) or traditional Corporate Political Activity (CPA). Our empirical data highlight clear distinctions from these alternative explanations:

- **Distinction from Standard PR:** Traditional PR operates reactively via press releases and brand positioning designed to control the narrative over 24-to-72-hour news cycles. Algorithmic Salience drives operational-level changes, such as rerouting transaction APIs, modifying product code, or altering compliance protocols, within hours to mitigate automated app deletion and infrastructure sabotage.
- **Distinction from Traditional CPA:** Classic CPA assumes that non-market strategy centers on building long-term relational capital and lobbying state actors (Baron, 1995, 2001). Under the Dual-Coercion Squeeze, close political alignment with state mandates can directly trigger consumer hostility.

5. Managerial & Policy Implications

Executive & Board Action Box: Agile Risk Checklist

- **Audit B2C Digital Vulnerability:** Map all public APIs, app store dependencies, and customer feedback channels for "flash-mob" resilience.
- **Establish a 2-Hour Escalation Protocol:** Bypass standard 24-hour PR approval chains during viral social surges.
- **Maintain Statutory Minimalism:** Comply strictly with written legal mandates while refraining from public political endorsements that trigger bottom-up boycotts.

5.1. Managerial Implications: Operationalizing Agile Risk Governance

To manage the Dual-Coercion Squeeze, corporate boards can implement a four-pillar operational framework:

1) Continuous Listening & Early Warning Nodes: Integrate AI-driven social listening directly into board risk committee feeds. Track the Velocity of Public Discontent (VPD) alongside traditional financial key risk indicators (Bromiley et al., 2015).

2) Cross-Functional Rapid-Response "War Rooms": Establish permanent crisis executive units (CEO, CRO, Chief Regulatory Officer, Legal Counsel, Brand Strategy) empowered with pre-delegated authority to execute narrative and operational adjustments within a 2-to-4-hour window (Boin et al., 2005).

3) Tactical Operational Neutrality: Decouple mandatory statutory regulatory compliance from corporate advocacy. Cite legal mandates strictly without endorsing political positions (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011).

4) Pre-Emptive Algorithmic Stress Testing: Conduct regular crisis simulations evaluating firm digital vulnerability, such as app store rating resilience and payment gateway API exposure, to decentralized crowd actions (Tufekci, 2017).

5.2. Public Policy & Regulatory Implications

- **Independence Buffers for Critical Infrastructure:** Policymakers should con-

sider establishing institutional buffers protecting essential private digital infrastructure (payment switches, telecom networks) from arbitrary political intervention (Frynas & Stephens, 2015).

- **Statutory Neutrality Protections:** Enact statutory "safe harbor" guidelines requiring state orders issued to private corporations during national emergencies to be publicly disclosed in writing, protecting firms from unjust public retaliation.
- **Standardized Digital Risk Disclosure:** Capital market regulators should update ESG and governance guidelines to require publicly listed firms to disclose their exposure and readiness protocols regarding algorithmic social risks (Scherer et al., 2016).

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates how corporate boards in emerging markets adapt to the rise of algorithmically mobilized, decentralized youth activism. By investigating #EndSARS in Nigeria and #RejectFinanceBill in Kenya, we contribute three core theoretical insights to management literature:

- **Algorithmic Salience:** Showing how platform mechanics amplify the Power and Urgency of leaderless youth networks without formal institutional Legitimacy (Mitchell et al., 1997; Tufekci, 2017).
- **The Dual-Coercion Squeeze:** Conceptualizing the pincer movement emerging market firms face between autocratic state mandates and viral consumer revolts (Frynas & Stephens, 2015; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011).
- **Agile Risk Governance:** Detailing how temporal compression drives boards to transition from static quarterly registries toward real-time, cross-functional risk protocols (Boin et al., 2005; Weick, 1995).

As digital platform dynamics continue to reorder non-market environments across the Global South, enterprise survival will depend on an organization's capacity to build agile governance models capable of matching the velocity of the crowd.

Declaration of Generative Al and Al-Assisted Technologies in Manuscript Preparation

During the preparation of this manuscript, ChatGPT was consulted in several sentences to help improve the clarity of manuscript. AI Tools were not used to develop the research context, conduct data analysis, explain research findings or prepare references. The concepts, arguments, scholarly contributions in this paper are entirely original. All AI generated suggestions were carefully revised by the author's own. The author takes full responsibility for the final manuscript.

Author Contributions

R.N.D. conceived the study, designed the qualitative framework, conducted field interviews, and drafted the manuscript. L.A. contributed to data triangulation, refined the theoretical boundary conditions, and reviewed the final draft.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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